

PUTNAM COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS



117 Putnam Drive, Suite A ♦ Eatonton, GA 31024

Minutes

Tuesday, March 19, 2024 ♦ 6:00 PM

Putnam County Administration Building – Room 203

The Putnam County Board of Commissioners met on Tuesday, March 19, 2024, at approximately 6:00 p.m. in the Putnam County Administration Building, 117 Putnam Drive, Room 203, Eatonton, Georgia.

PRESENT

Chairman Bill Sharp
Commissioner Gary McElhenney
Commissioner Daniel Brown
Commissioner Steve Hersey
Commissioner Jeff Wooten

STAFF PRESENT

County Attorney Adam Nelson
County Manager Paul Van Haute
Deputy County Clerk Donna Todd

STAFF ABSENT

County Clerk Lynn Butterworth

Opening

1. Welcome - Call to Order

Chairman Sharp called the meeting to order at approximately 6:00 p.m.

2. Approval of Agenda

Motion to approve the agenda.

Motion made by Commissioner Wooten, Seconded by Commissioner Brown.

Voting Yea: Commissioner McElhenney, Commissioner Brown, Commissioner Hersey, Commissioner Wooten

(Copy of agenda made a part of the minutes on minute book page _____.)

3. Invocation - Brandon Walton - Bible Fellowship Church

Mr. Brandon Walton, Pastor of Bible Fellowship Church, gave the invocation.

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4. Pledge of Allegiance (DB)

Commissioner Brown led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Regular Business Meeting

5. Public Comments

Ms. Barbara Vargo spoke about property size instead of house size when it comes to buildings. When people downsize their home, they want to be able to put up another building for storage without having to be considered for an exception.

6. Consent Agenda

- a. Approval of Minutes - February 20, 2024 Regular Meeting (staff-CC)
- b. Approval of Minutes - March 1, 2024 Regular Meeting (staff-CC)
- c. Approval of 2024 Alcohol License (staff-CC)

Motion to approve the Consent Agenda.

Motion made by Commissioner McElhenney, Seconded by Commissioner Wooten.

Voting Yea: Commissioner McElhenney, Commissioner Brown, Commissioner Hersey, Commissioner Wooten

(Copy of alcohol license made a part of the minutes on minute book page _____.)

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7. Request for approval to hold a public hearing on the proposed changes to Chapters 28, 32, and 66 of the Putnam County Code of Ordinances (staff-CM)

County Attorney Nelson reminded the board that in order to make changes to ordinances, a public hearing must be held. The codes on this meeting's agenda have been discussed at a Work Session. Tonight's vote is to decide whether to hold a Public Hearing.

Mr. William Vargo commented that since there are so many issues and agenda items to discuss at the public hearing, he requested that the format of the public comments portion be modified so that each person could speak on each chapter or issue. It would make the meeting longer, but the board would be able to hear what the people have to say.

Mrs. Barbara Vargo signed up to speak but declined the opportunity when called.

County Attorney Nelson added the public and board are aware of what the proposed amendments are intended to do. Chapters 28 and 66 are related to the development code for the county. Most of Chapter 66 is clean up from issues resulting from development trends. Chapter 32 is related to development to the extent that it includes fire protection services. Those have been vetted and discussed. There was a proposal to include a burn permit process, but that has been reserved so it will not be part of these considerations. The proposals deal with development of property as opposed to the burn permit. The purpose of this process is to allow there to be consideration, proposed changes, communication from the public and commissioners to get the ordinance the way you want it. The ordinance put before the public is a proposal. Changes may be made to those provisions.

Commissioner Hersey commented about the different versions of the changes to the ordinance and wanted to verify that the changes represented in the current meeting package were the ones being considered.

Motion to approve the scheduling of a Public Hearing on the proposed changes to Chapters 28, 32, and 66 of the Putnam County Code of Ordinances.

Motion made by Commissioner Wooten, Seconded by Commissioner Brown.

Commissioner Hersey commented that he agrees with Mr. Vargo that there are a lot of changes and a lot of material in different areas. He supported the idea of allowing people to speak to each agenda item or issue. He also suggested that there be one more than one public hearing so that the public can speak to the issues.

Amended motion to approve the scheduling of two Public Hearings on the proposed changes to Chapters 28, 32, and 66: one meeting for Chapters 28 and 66, and one meeting for Chapter 32, of the Putnam County Code of Ordinances.

Amended motion made by Commissioner Hersey, Seconded by Commissioner Brown.

Commissioner Wooten requested clarification on people speaking on every issue. Chairman sharp clarified that anyone wishing to speak would have 3 minutes.

Voting Yea: Commissioner McElhenney, Commissioner Brown, Commissioner Hersey, Commissioner Wooten

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8. Discussion and possible action to reduce the speed limit on Parks Mill Road from 55 mph to 45mph (SH)

Mr. Mike Judy commented about the cars up and down the small stretch of Parks Mill, numerous subdivisions. With Parks Mill Road becoming more of a north and south thoroughfare, development in the area now and proposed development in Morgan and Putnam that will add to the traffic in this stretch of road.

Sheriff Sills commented that a traffic study was required. An engineering/traffic study has to be done but there are no justifications or guidelines. The County can legally put up a sign. There have been 21 accidents in the last 5 years on Parks Mill. Most of the causes of the accidents were not related to speed. Only one accident was speed related (hydroplaning). We can only enforce speeding with radar. Radar can only be run on roads that are listed on the license the Sheriff has. Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) does not always allow it. If the county wishes to lower the speed limit, we will have to ask (GDOT) to add that on the license. Sheriff Sills agreed to email Hersey the list of roads on the license.

Motion to authorize County Manager to conduct a traffic study on Parks Mill Road.

Motion made by Commissioner Hersey, Seconded by Commissioner Brown.

Voting Yea: Commissioner Brown, Commissioner Hersey, Commissioner Wooten

Voting Nay: Commissioner McElhenney

Commissioner Hersey distributed a map, which was prepared by Mr. Mike Judy, to the board. (Copy of map made a part of the minutes on minute book pages _____ to _____.)

9. Chairman's Appointment of Jimmy Davis Park Partnership Advisory Committee (BS)

Ms. K. Garrett spoke about putting the committee together for JD Park. Said she would like to be on the board. Since she has been invested in Jimmy Davis Park from the beginning, she would like to be on the board to see it go forward.

Commissioner Brown spoke, saying that he has longed for this point we've reached over the 8 years he's been a commissioner. He is proud to see all he has visualized for Jimmy Davis Park. He thanked County Manager Van Haute, the Public Works Department, Mr. Tweedy Parham, and the Commissioners. Many obstacles have been overcome, but Jimmy Davis Park is turning a corner. We want people on this committee who will work hard to make Jimmy Davis Park a place where people can feel safe and be proud. Commissioner Brown read the following names of people he chose for the Jimmy Davis Park Partnership Advisory Committee: Ms. Patricia Hurt, Ms. Annie Bishop, Mr. LaCorrie Brown, Mr. David Levester, Jr., and Ms. Janie Reid. Chairman Sharp accepted Commissioner Brown's appointments to and the resulting creation of the Jimmy Davis Park Partnership Advisory Committee. He requested that Deputy Clerk Donna Todd send a letter to each member notifying them of their appointment.

No board members objected to the appointments.

10. Chairman's Appointment to MGRC Aging Advisory Council (BS)

Chairman Sharp approved the volunteer appointment of Ms. Carolyn Gray to the Middle Georgia Aging Advisory Council.

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Reports/Announcements

11. County Manager Report

Thanked Mr. Charles Gray and his team, and all the benefactors for their help in the effort to complete the construction of a wheelchair ramp at Clerk Lynn Butterworth’s house. Please continue to pray for Lynn.

Congratulations to Deputy Clerk Donna Todd for her response to an open records request test sent by the Atlanta Journal Constitution.

Putnam County’s Workers Compensation claims are reduced. This has resulted in a \$33,000 refund in our Workers Compensation premium. Thanks to all staff, especially Public Safety and Public Works for their efforts to be safe.

12. County Attorney Report

No report.

13. Commissioner Announcements

Commissioner McElhenney: no report.

Commissioner Bown: announced that the Butler Baker Project is having a luncheon fundraiser. All are invited to attend, especially Butler Baker Alumni.

Commissioner Hersey: no report.

Commissioner Wooten: thanked the staff, and present and past commissioners for all they have done over the years to bring Putnam County to where it is today.

Chairman Sharp: offered thanks to Mr. Charles Gray and the Oconee Springs Community for the work they did to build the wheelchair ramp at County Clerk Lynn Butterworth’s house. They also remade the steps and did a great job. He also asked for continued prayers for Lynn.

Closing

14. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn the meeting.

Motion made by Commissioner McElhenney, Seconded by Commissioner Wooten.

Voting Yea: Commissioner McElhenney, Commissioner Brown, Commissioner Hersey, Commissioner Wooten

Meeting adjourned at approximately 7:04 p.m.

ATTEST:

Donna Todd
Deputy County Clerk

B. W. “Bill” Sharp
Chairman

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